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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 001633

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/GAVITO/YERGER

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: ON BORDER PROJECT, GERMANS LOOKING AHEAD
AND NOT AT SHORT TERM PROBLEMS

REF: BEIRUT 1565

Classified By: DCM William Grant for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) A businessman whose firm is the logistical consultant for the German Northern Border Pilot Project (NBPP) told Poloff in an October 17 meeting that the NBPP continued to face serious delays and would not be fully operational by mid-February, rather than the target December 1 final deadline. He also noted that the incoming head of the NBPP, General Carl-Ulrich Stoltz, was not well liked by his German team members which may lead to further conflicts. He believes that the Germans are rushing to complete the NBPP even if they do not meet standards, in order to start on a larger, more prestigious eastern border project. End Summary.

DECEMBER 1 START DATE FOR NBPP IN DOUBT

¶2. (C) Sabeh Labaki, a Lebanese businessman whose firm is the logistical consultant for the NBPP (and also provides services to the U.S. Embassy), said in an October 17 meeting with PolOff, that the NBPP has had numerous procurement and managerial problems since the project began. Labaki noted that the primary problem has been with the NBPP's procurement office. Labaki (please protect) said that his company was originally responsible for procurement matters for the NBPP, however, once the project got off its feet, his role was reduced to that of a consultant. After this change, Labaki said that the project's procurement problems increased and the NBPP as a whole began to face serious logistical problems.

¶3. (C) Labaki added that he believed that the project would be fully operational by mid-February. When PolOff mentioned that operations are set to begin by a final deadline of December 1, Labaki laughed, saying that it could begin on December 1, but that it would not be fully operational. Labaki said that the project would lack many necessities on December 1, such as cameras and lights for the border crossing points, and uniforms for border agents. He added that the training being provided by Danish would not begin until well into January (Note: After attending several NBPP meetings, our view is that training is the least of the problems plaguing this project, and appears to be the only aspect of the NBPP running smoothly. End Note).

NEW GERMAN LEAD NOT WELL LIKED BY STAFF

14. (C) Labaki also noted that the incoming head of the NBPP, General Carl-Ulrich Stoltz, was not well liked by his German subordinates. Labaki added that outgoing head, Detlef Karioth, was more liked by the NBPP staff and was held in higher regard by the German Ambassador and DCM in Lebanon. Labaki gossiped that someone back in Germany (identity unknown to Labaki) wanted Detlef recalled from the NBPP. Labaki added that when the German Ambassador tried to step in on Detlef's behalf, higher authorities in Germany rebuffed the request, wondering why the Ambassador would want Detlef to stay given his poor performance on the project.

GERMAN DESIGNS ON THE EASTERN BORDER

15. (C) During the discussion, Labaki gave his opinion that the Germans were too busy worrying about being designated with the lead role for the bigger border control effort on Lebanon's eastern border with Syria (reftel). Labaki said that the Germans mentioned to him that they might need his services in June 2008 if the eastern border project gets the green light. Labaki added that Germany, after the leading the NBPP, would be well placed to offer such services to the Lebanese and Syrians. He feared that the Germans were willing to rush through the NBPP, in order to begin the new project on the eastern border.

COMMENT

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16. (C) Labaki is clearly plugged in to the NBPP and knows the technical details well. His analysis of the proposed larger eastern border project seemed to be speculation, however. As discussions of the NBPP continue, we will watch for problems in the areas he cited: completing work at less than necessary standards and strains between the incoming head and other German staff. End Comment.
FELTMAN